

PLAYGROUND

Written by

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EXT. PARK - PICNIC TABLE - DAY

AVA, 6, eats a peanut butter sandwich at a picnic table. Her MOTHER, 36, sits across from her and reads a book.

LEO, 6, runs past the table and stops in front of Ava.

LEO
Hi! I'm Leo.

Ava looks at her mother and puts her sandwich down. Mother nods her head slightly.

MOTHER
(mouths)
Talk.

Mother turns away.

AVA
I'm Ava.

LEO
I was wondering if you wanted to
play with me.

Ava looks at her mother, who nods again.

AVA
Um, sure.

LEO
You can finish eating. Just meet me
at the playground.

Leo exits and Ava takes another bite of her sandwich. She looks up to see Mother blowing kisses at her daughter.

AVA
Mom, stop.

Mother chuckles and Ava walks toward the playground.

EXT. PARK - PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

Leo sits waiting for Ava on the steps. He jumps up when he sees her.

LEO
Welcome aboard matey!

He grabs Ava's hand and walks up the steps.

LEO (CONT'D)
Do you wanna play Pirate Ship with
me?

AVA
What's that?

LEO
It's simple. We just act like we're
on a pirate ship.

AVA
Okay.

LEO
Sweet. First thing, we need to
leave the harbor. Go detach the
rope at the bottom of the steps.

Ava turns to look at the steps. A rope appears, tied to a big
tree. Ava slowly walks to the bottom, unties the rope, and
throws it toward the tree.

Far away, Mother listens to music, eyes closed, on a towel.

Ava stands tall on the bridge, eyes on something in the
distance. Leo stands next to her.

LEO (CONT'D)
Beautiful right? I think you're
beautiful.

Beat.

LEO (CONT'D)
Let me show you something.

Leo walks off the bridge. Ava waits a beat, but follows after
him. He ducks into a tunnel and Ava peers in.

LEO (CONT'D)
Come sit.

INT. PLAYGROUND - TUNNEL - DAY

Ava moves to sit next to Leo, the bright color blinding her.

LEO
Now, look through the circle.

Ava looks forward at the circle, squinting, before her face
becomes shocked.

Through the window, a view of a tropical blue ocean and shallow sandy beaches, covered in palm trees.

Ava backs away from the window and slowly turns her head to look outside of the tunnel.

EXT. PLAYGROUND TURNED OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

Ocean waves cover the small square the jungle gym sits on, woods chips are gone.

Ava looks at Mother, who can still be seen in the surroundings.

The waves roll from one side, going under the bridge to the other side of the lot.

Ava moves toward the bottoms steps as the waves hit them. She reaches to cup the water and scoops some into her mouth.

Leo rings a bell on the other side of the tunnel. Ava walks toward him and crawls through the tunnel.

On the other side, Leo is gone. The bell still rings. A storm flag hangs off the side.

Ava stands in the center of the structure. Rain pours down and lightning flickers in the sky.

The waves reach higher and Ava falls to the floor as the playground moves through the storm.

Ava stands as another wave crashes through, spilling over the top deck. She scrambles to the tunnel and begins to crawl through.

INT. PLAYGROUND TURNED OCEAN - TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Through the window a large wave rears up and crashes into the side. Ava is thrown against the side of the tunnel.

AVA
Help, someone, please!

EXT. PLAYGROUND TURNED OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

Ava gets out of the tunnel and holds on to a pole. The storm still remains in the little plot of land.

AVA
Mom? Mom?

Mother stills lays on the towel in the sun, oblivious.

LEO

Ava.

Ava turns to look and sees nothing.

LEO (CONT'D)

Ava.

Ava looks toward the slide across the bridge.

Leo is on the slide. Blood covers his face and scratches everywhere. His eyes are ghostly grey. As he opens his mouth, his face melts off and his bloody skull begins to show.

LEO (CONT'D)

Help me, Ava. Help me.

Leo lets go and goes down the slide. Ava runs back to the tunnel.

INT. PLAYGROUND TURNED OCEAN - TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Ava enter the tunnel and scrambles to sit. She peeks out the window and sees her mother.

AVA

Mom!

Ava looks toward the exits of the tunnel and sees them blocked. She pounds on the plastic where the exits had been.

AVA (CONT'D)

Help, please! Anyone?

FATHER (O.S.)

Ava?

Ava looks out the window and sees DAD, 39, standing in the water.

AVA

Dad?

A hand reaches in and grabs her hair from behind, the only other window in the tunnel. Outside the window, her dad's face begins to melt off.

Ava continues to fight off the person holding her hair, but still the hold is tight.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Mother lays on her towel, before she coughs up a weird amount of water. She coughs again, tries to catch her breath, and looks up to find Ava.

MOTHER

Ava? Honey? Where are you?

Mother walks over to the playground and begins to look around.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Ava? Can you come out? Where are you?

Silence.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Ava? Now, please, this isn't funny.

Mother turns around when water splashes through one of the tunnel's windows. She crawls in.

INT. PLAYGROUND - TUNNEL

Mother crawls inside as more water shoves through the window. She reaches forward and grabs hair from the wave. Ava's hair.

MOTHER

No. Ava. NO!

EXT. TROPICAL BEACH - DAY

The same beautiful landscape and a small body being pushed up the sand by the waves.

Ava lays still for a beat, before she turns and coughs up water. Her face still streaks with blood as she stands up.

LEO

Ava?

AVA

Leo?

LEO

Ava, I'm so sorry.

AVA

What's going on?

LEO
I'm sorry.

AVA
Where are we?

LEO
I shouldn't have brought you here.

AVA
What?

LEO
I was just lonely.

AVA
Leo, what are you talking about?

LEO
I just didn't want to be by myself.

AVA
Leo, tell me what is going on. I
want my mom.

Leo turns away from Ava.

LEO
You don't get it. I cried and
cried. I didn't want to be alone
anymore.

AVA
I want my mom.

LEO
You think I don't want my mom? I
just needed someone to understand.

Ava steps back from him in confusion.

LEO (CONT'D)
I just wanted you.

AVA
Leo, take me back to my mom.

LEO
No one cared about me. But, then I
found you. You can care about me.
You can love me. I already love
you. We can be together, just us.
We don't need anyone else.

Ava backs up further from, turns, and runs down the sand. Leo chases after her.

<p>AVA No, I need to go. Where's my mom? How do I get back? Please, someone?</p>	<p>LEO (CONT'D) You're the perfect fit for me. We can start a life together.</p>
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Ava collapses in the sand. Leo comes to a stop next to her.

LEO (CONT'D)
Come on, Ava. We can take care of
each other.

AVA
I just want to go home.

Leo grabs her hair and wrenches her head back.

LEO
I told you, we are going to be
happy together. Just accept it.

Ava slams her head back into his chin. She stands and runs again. She glances behind and sees Leo's face melting into a skeleton again.

LEO (CONT'D)
Ava, what are you so afraid of?

AVA
Get away from me!

Ava runs into to ocean and dives through the waves. She struggles to stay above the waves. Behind her, Leo simply watches and stays away from the water.

Ava tries to call for help, but water washes into her mouth. She sinks underneath the waves, her hands grabs for the air. She does not come back up.

EXT. TROPICAL BEACH - NIGHT

Leo sits on the beach, his face normal, and watches the waves roll in.

Ava's body appears on the shore. Leo walks over and checks her pulse, grabs her arms, and pulls her back toward the line of trees. They disappear from view.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Police cars line the block in front of the playground, their lights flicker up to the sign: "IN MEMORY OF LEO SMYTHE."

POLICE MEN enters and applies hazard tape around the sign and continues around the rest of the area.

Mother rests her head on the shoulder of an FBI AGENT as she cries.

THE END